

Amendments to the Claims:

11. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women, comprising

- a) a hard internal breast plate formed to provide a right cup and a left cup, said right cup and said left cup conforming to the contour of a woman's breasts, wherein said hard internal breast plate does not extend to a lower region of the woman's rib cage,
- b) a center sternum area, wherein said center sternum area is positioned between said right cup and said left cup, and said right cup and said left cup are each connected to said center sternum area, and wherein said center sternum area has flexibility therein along a longitudinal axis passing between said right cup and said left cup,
- c) a first strap which engages said right cup opposite said center sternum area, and
- d) a second strap which engages said left cup opposite said center sternum area,

wherein said first strap and said second strap apply pressure to said first cup and to said second cup and press said first cup and said second cup against the woman's breasts, and cause said center sternum area to flex along said longitudinal axis passing between said right cup and said left cup.

12. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 11, wherein said hard internal breast plate is formed as a unitary member to provide said right cup, said left cup, and said center sternum area.

13. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 11, wherein said center sternum area is not a strap which comprises elastic.

14. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 11, wherein said center sternum area comprises an upper hinge and a lower hinge, and a void which is positioned between said upper hinge and said lower hinge.

15. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 11, further comprising a resilient encasement which surrounds said hard internal breast plate.

16. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 11, wherein said center sternum hinge comprises at least one vent therein.

17. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women, comprising
a) a hard internal breast plate formed to provide a right cup and a left cup, said right cup and said left cup conforming to the contour of a woman's breasts, wherein said hard internal breast plate does not extend to a lower region of the woman's rib cage,

b) a center sternum area, wherein said center sternum area is positioned between said right cup and said left cup, and said right cup and said left cup are each connected to said center sternum area, and wherein said center sternum area has flexibility therein along a longitudinal axis passing between said right cup and said left cup,

c) means for applying pressure to said right cup which engages said right cup opposite said center sternum area, and

d) means for applying pressure to said left cup which engages said left cup opposite said center sternum area,

wherein said means for applying pressure to said first cup and said means for applying pressure to said second cup apply pressure to said first cup and to said second cup and press said first cup and said second cup against the woman's breasts, and cause said center sternum area to flex along said longitudinal axis passing between said right cup and said left cup.

18. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 17, wherein said hard internal breast plate is formed as a unitary member to provide said right cup, said left cup, and said center sternum area.

19. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 17, wherein said center sternum area is not a strap which comprises elastic.

20. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 17, wherein said center sternum area comprises an upper hinge and a lower hinge, and a void which is positioned between said upper hinge and said lower hinge.

21. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 17, further comprising a resilient encasement which surrounds said hard internal breast plate.

22. (Previously presented) A chest and breast protector for women as described in claim 17, wherein said center sternum hinge comprises at least one vent therein.